

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. 1. (Currently Amended) A method of predicting determining whether an individual having hepatitis B virus (HBV) infection will respond to interferon alpha (IFN α) treatment, the method comprising:

i) obtaining a pre-treatment sample from said HBV-infected individual,
ii) analyzing said pre-treatment sample for determining the presence or absence of antibodies reactive with a preS1 peptide consisting of the sequence of residues 94-117 (SEQ ID NO:1) ~~in a pre treatment sample obtained from the individual, and;~~
~~predicting from wherein~~ the presence of said antibodies in said pre-treatment sample indicates that said individual will respond to said treatment ~~or predicting from and~~ the absence of said antibodies in said pre-treatment sample indicates that said individual will not respond to said treatment.

2.-3. (Cancelled).

4. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 1 wherein the individual has chronic HBV infection.

5. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 1 wherein the individual is HBeAg positive.

6. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 1 wherein the individual is HBeAg negative.

7. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 1 wherein, in step (ii), said pre-treatment sample is analyzed for the presence or absence of the antibodies are IgG or IgM antibodies reactive with said preS1 peptide.

8. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 1 wherein the pre-treatment sample is a blood, serum or plasma sample.

9. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 1 wherein step (ii) comprises comprising:

contacting the pre-treatment sample with a preS1 peptide consisting of the sequence of residues 94-117 (SEQ ID NO:1) and;

detecting the presence or absence of binding of determining binding of said antibodies to said preS1 peptide.

10. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 9 wherein the preS1 peptide comprises a detectable label.

11. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 9 wherein said preS1 peptide is immobilised.

12. (Previously Presented) A method according to claim 9 wherein said binding is detected with a labelled secondary antibody.

13.-19. (Cancelled).

20. (Currently Amended) A method of treating ~~a hepatitis B an HBV~~ infection in an individual identified as being responsive to IFN α comprising:

- i) obtaining a pre-treatment sample from an HBV-infected individual,
- ii) analyzing said pre-treatment sample for determining the presence or absence of antibodies reactive with a preS1 peptide consisting of the sequence of residues 94-117 (SEQ ID NO:1) ~~in a pre-treatment sample obtained from the individual;~~
~~predicting from wherein~~ the presence of said antibodies in said pre-treatment sample indicates that said individual will respond to ~~interferon alpha (IFN α) IFN α~~ treatment, and;
administering IFN α to said individual identified as being responsive to IFN α .

21. (Cancelled).

22. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 20 further comprising administering ~~wherein~~ corticosteroid ~~to said individual identified as being responsive to IFN α is administered to the individual.~~

23. (Cancelled).